

**BAYFIELD COUNTY FORESTRY AND PARKS DEPARTMENT**  
**COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**August 14, 2023**  
**County Board Room**

**Members Present:** Fred Strand; Jeffrey Silbert; Steve Sandstrom; Larry Fickbohm; Charly Ray

**Staff in Attendance:** Jason Bodine, Administrator; Steve Probst, Assistant Administrator; Deanna Regan, Office Manager

**Others in Attendance:** Joseph Lebouton, WI DNR; Jason Buran

**1. Call to Order of Forestry and Parks Committee Meeting.**

This meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM.

**2. Public Comment.**

Public Comment opened at 6:02 PM. Jason Buran commented on Bass Lake Barrens project, which is adjacent to his property, asking committee to re-examine cutting around the creek and slowing the project down over the next few years. Public comment closed at 6:05 PM.

**3. Approval of the June 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes.**

***MOTION:** (Silbert, Fickbohm) Approve minutes and place on file. All: Yes. Carried.*

**4. Monthly Reports.**

- a) Forestry (all updates). Stumpage revenue for July was slightly above average at just over \$363k. Current total timber sale revenue is at \$2.1 million which is \$550k less than the three-year average. Expenses are below budget.
- a. 2023 Budget. Stumpage returns are predicted to be very close to budgeted amount.
- b. Spongy Moth. Previously defoliated trees have mostly leafed out. Biggest concern moving forward will be monitoring for mortality and signs of rapid decline. An increase in salvage related activities is expected.
- c. Carbon Project. There has been no change in the status of our project. Total number of credits expected by the end of this year is in the 1.2 million range. Recently fulfilled an open records request from a national journalist.
- d. Land Acquisition Projects. Still working with the DNR and DOA regarding the ARPA contract. Collaborating with Landmark Conservancy on a 160 acre purchase in Barksdale and roughly 900 acres along the Iron River. In preliminary discussions regarding a potential wetland restoration project with the DNR near the Sand River.
- e. Barrens Projects. Work at Bass Lake and Barnes Barrens continues to progress. New access road along the western perimeter at Bass Lake was recently completed. The DNR is considering a fall burn this year. We are looking to purchase a roller chopper to assist with knocking down brush and small trees in our barrens management areas. Contractors for this type of work are increasingly hard to find and generally expensive. If we owned one, it could be pulled with county or DNR equipment and potentially leased to other units of government for similar barrens work, which could generate a new source of revenue. It's in the 2024 capital budget but could possibly be purchased in 2023 with savings realized from various 2023 capital and reforestation projects. This would allow removal from the 2024 budget request and also reduce the reforestation budget accordingly.

- f. Certification Audit. The annual county forest program certification audit was held last week with Washburn, Sawyer, Burnett, and Barron counties as hosts. Preliminary findings indicate no major or minor corrective actions. We are scheduled to host with Douglas, Iron, and Ashland counties in 2026.
- g. Cable SMA Plan Update. Work on the plan is relatively slow but should ramp up this fall/early winter with more meetings with our rec partners and numerous opportunities for public input.
- b) Campgrounds and Day Use Parks. The Highway Department finished the overflow parking areas at Twin Bear and Delta Lake and new entry signs have been installed at Twin Bear. Have estimates and exploring options for repairs to various retaining walls at Twin Bear. Overall campground use is down slightly when compared to last season.
  - a. Campground Manager Contract. Current contract expires at the end of this year. Recommend extending contract for 3-5 years.
  - b. Big Rock Sign Replacement. Collaborating with Chequamegon Bay Arts Council (CBAC) about options for replacement of current hand painted sign.
  - c. Fire Hill Plan Update. There are limitations/restrictions on how this property can be used and developed due to it being purchased with Stewardship funds. The emphasis is on non-motorized and low impact use. Basic plan is in place, but updates would address future planned activities and timelines.
- c) Trails and Recreation.
  - a. Motorized Trails. ATV/UTV trails are in full swing. Annual state motorized rec council meeting is scheduled for later this month.
  - b. Non-Motorized Trails. A new entrance sign was installed at Siskiwit Falls with a similar one soon to be installed at Lost Creek Falls. Trail improvements continue at the Lost Creek, Siskiwit, and Jolly properties. Prairie restoration work will continue this fall on the old field at Siskiwit, which involves an additional burn by the DNR and seeding with a native prairie mix.
  - c. Yurts. Still dealing with mice at the two Bayfield locations. Tracking occupancy before committing to a 4<sup>th</sup> unit. There is a continued downward trend, but occupancy rates are still higher than expected prior to building the yurts.
  - d. Events. Nothing new to report.

***MOTION: (Fickbohm, Sandstrom) Receive reports as presented and place on file. All: Yes. Carried.***

- 5. 2024 Forestry and Parks Department Budget.** Bodine summarized the draft budget which would result in a net levy contribution of \$1.684 million compared to a return of \$1.758 million as per the 2023 budget. This represents a decreased net levy contribution of ~ \$73k or roughly 4%. Timber sale revenue was increased by \$25k. Overall revenue would increase by about \$54k from 2023 at roughly \$4.08 million. Personnel expenses are expected to increase by roughly \$104k. Overall expenses across all programs is expected to be \$2.4 million, which is about a 6% increase (~\$127k) when compared to 2023. Capital improvements budgeted for 2024 are Fire Hill recreation improvements, Jackman Lake day use area improvements, Pigeon Lake assessment, rec property improvements and Twin Bear retaining walls and site improvements. Carbon is not included in the budget although some activity is anticipated before the end of this year which could influence 2024 operating and capital budgets, with the potential to shift most of the rec items to carbon.

***MOTION: (Fickbohm, Sandstrom) Approve budget to go before Executive Committee. All: Yes. Carried.***

6. **County Conservation Aid Grant.** Bodine is proposing improvements to the Jackman Lake Day Use area with this 50/50 match grant. Upgrades would include an improved parking area, beach area, fishing pier, picnic tables, fire ring, and porta potty. Application for grant requires committee approval.

***MOTION: (Ray, Sandstrom) Proceed with grant application. All: Yes. Carried.***

7. **Committee Members Discussion.** Discussion regarding Jackman Lake project and Bass Lake Barrens project. Also discussed when to inform/engage the public on projects.

8. **Joseph LeBouton, DNR Representative, Comments:** None

The next Forestry and Parks Committee meeting has been scheduled for **Monday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 PM** in the County Board Room.

Meeting adjourned at 7:42 PM.

Submitted by,  
***Deanna Regan***